# "I Only."

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## A Voice from Acadia's Vale of Weeping.

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By E. K.

ON the morning of the 7th June, 1852, Professor Chipman, of Acadia College, Wolfville, N. S., and four of the students—William E. Grant, Benjamin Rand, Anthony Phalen and William H. King—also Rev. R. D. Very, pastor in Portland, St. John, N. B., and two boatmen, Perez Caldwell and Charles Benjamin, left Wolfville for an excursion to Cape Blomidon. They expected to return in the evening. While on the return passage across the Basin of Minas, and about half a mile from the shore of Long Island, the boat was struck by a heavy sea, and all, except Benjamin, were drowned.

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Ye waves repeat to-night, the tale oft told before ;
Thy voiceful billows leap, on yonder fateful shore,
Like wolves, foam-mouthed, for prey escaped in time of yore.
Adown a vista dim, shadowed by many years ;
Beyond the path, grass grown, and dank with fallen tears,
The glint of sunlit waves dances and disappears.
And then wide shadows fall along the time-worn glade,
Shadows that break, and blend, or gather close, dismayed,
While branches swaying arms drive them to deeper shade.
Lift your perennial boughs, ye towering years, widespread ;
Reveal the waves that sing a requiem for the dead
Who ever walk this vale with peaceful, spirit tread.
A requiem for the dead ;—the long lamented seven,
Whose phantom ship through storm and foam, sailed into Heaven
And left earth-hopes of that fair morn, stranded and riven.
The answer cometh low.
As sound of feet afar, when marching to and fro,
The waters speak in ever ceaseless ebb and flow.
"One morn, as fair a morn as ever earth hath seen,
Bright sunlight, fragrant breeze, and water's silver sheen,
Rare beauty on the hills, and in the vales between.
Happy that laborious tasks, for present time, were o'er,
Acadia's Sons, home-bound, would one brief day explore,
Where many treasures wait, on Blomidon's rough shore.
Student, Instructor, Guest, two boatmen skilled and strong.
—Blow gently, favoring breeze, and waft their boat along,
Until incoming tide harbor the homeward song.
O treacherous morn ! thine hand awave with beckoning call
No signal gave to venturous feet, of sudden thrall,
Captives of stormy winds and waves, then Death's dark pall.
Save one, they came again to earthly homes no more,

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He, backward thrust so rudely from Death's open door,
Amid the tidal drift, lay helpless on the shore.
That night, as bruised reed, Acadia's low-bowed head
Sank to the weeds about her feet, with sackcloth spread,
While from her eyes the light of hope had well nigh fled.
As graver's knife, have been the tears that plenteous fell,
And seamed and furrowed tablets aye that story tell,—
Those tears have crystalled into polished gems since then."
And so the tale is told ;
While waves roll up in swelling surges as of old,
And over them, the fitful winds, their wings unfold.

Shine out ye postern lights, athwart the murky sky
O'erspreading wooded dales—forests of days gone by—
Shine out ! and let your darts of lightning flame mount high.
Illuminate the track, where 'mid crisp withered leaves
We walk ; the overhanging branch, low-drooping, grieves,
And Time, with shuttle swift, a web of change still weaves.
Shine on : thy rays are fingers that withdraw a screen,
Reach forth and pierce the clouds beyond, that intervene,
And lo! in open view behold a pictured scene.
A stretch of troublous waters and a pebbly strand,
A breadth of verdure, leading unto fruitful land ;
A helpless body lifted, 'mid an awestruck band.
Slowly to life again—O was it life ? to him,
The measure of that cup, whose overflowing brim
Redewed henceforth the eyes, almost in death grown dim.
A life whose brightness faded to return no more
When that fair, sunny morn so swiftly clouded o'er.
Youth set the sail that day, age came with him to shore.
On all the strength and beauty of young manhood's prime,
Came sudden blight, as track of frost in summer's time,
When drooping leaf and bud reveal the touch of rime.
As in a dream he answered, when they bade him tell,
"What of the missing seven ; what evil thing befel ?
Canst give one word of hope our darkest fears to quell ?"
But hope, her trailing robe had lifted, and passed by ;
And when the anxious messengers had gathered nigh,
As from a vision came the words that made reply.
A vision ever present unto him alone,
And as he tells, he hears afar in ocean's moan,

Words, unto which like echoes seem to fall his own.
Faithful as mirrored scene, the words though faint and few,
And fixed, far-off gaze—reflector strong and true,
Spread yesterday's dire tragedy before their view.
"But one half mile from shore;
Rough homeward passage, danger fraught, now almost o'er;
The shadow of their fears falling astern once more.
Shoreward the earnest gaze, and spirits hopeful, brave;
Unmindful of yon towering, swiftly onward, wave,
Oh Thou most merciful! O come Thou near, and save.
The foam-capped head hath passed;—with flowing locks of spray
That over and around, in wild disorder stray.
What of the homeward bound, where now, O where, are they?
O'erwhelmed, yet they rise—submerged again! Stay, stay!
See how the tumbling waves, like savage beasts at play,
Toss sportively awhile, ere they devour their prey.
And now the vision drifteth towards the open Bay,
Behind that rended veil of sweeping tresses grey;
In draperies of mist, floats on, and on, for aye."
And while the mists recede, and wending shadows pale,
From shore rolls out to sea, this oft-repeated wail,
"And I, I only, am survived to tell the tale."
Days came, and days passed by; sunshine and cloud and storm,
The beautiful of earth, in ever-varying form—
Glad voices called, in vain—all powerless to warm
With sunny smile, and cheery summer's sweetest sounds,
The spirit over which a chill had set its bounds,
And while life's ladder climbing, broke the lower rounds.
Ambition, Joy, and Hope with peaceful, blessed Rest,
Sought vainly, in the corridors towards the West,
For steps up to the tower, where dwelt that soul distrest.
Thus solitary, through each day, while mingling oft
With busy fellow-men upon the street or croft,
His step among them ever came, faltering and soft.
In every earnest gaze, he read reproach and scorn,
While Fancy's minions whispered, to the spirit worn,
"He saved himself, his comrades whither? have been borne."
He thought they blamed *him* for the loss of life deplored,
And counted him as murderer, whom avenging sword
Had spared to be an object all through life abhorred.

The little children saw the impress of a sigh
Upon that quiet face, and vaguely wondering why,
Their merry voices hushed, while sadly he passed by.
To him, their silent wonder seemed the speech of fear,
"They shun me, even these shrink from my drawing near"
He moaned, then slowly turned into a path more drear.
Forever restless, as the tread of wandering star
Or as the fluttering wings of timid wild birds are,
The eyes, whose troubled gaze sought the dim space afar.
Yet, whatsoe'er he touched with toil of hand or brain,
Yielded unstinted meed, of transitory gain;
As if in mocking compensation for life's pain.

Who hath not known how the returning seasons bring
What yester-time they bore upon retreating wing,
Whither of joy to light the heart, or grief to wring.
How doth the spring-time quicken memory's wearying
And dewy blossoms from one far-off May day bring,
While birds and breezes, of a friend long parted, sing.
Parted in sadness, brooded o'er by faithful Hope
Who left, perchance, long since, that eyrie nest to grope
Through tangled mazes, till the gates afar shall ope.

Grief-laden, oft comes summer zephyr's gentlest breath
Freighted with visions of the chill and hush of death;
"'Twas thus a year"—or years—"ago" the evening saith.
So unto him, of whom these words now briefly tell,
With each returning season, swept a deeper swell
Of strong wild surges, that long since had come to dwell.

And when the last night-watch, in winter's camp was told,
When parting bugle-notes along the valley rolled,
And snowy ensigns changed to emerald and gold.
When mountain streamlets lifted voices loud and clear,
The vocal spirits seemed to spring from far and near,
Calling—he thought—"O come to us, come here, come here"

By some strange fascination oft-times thither led,
Towards the "Island's" shore his hastening footsteps sped,
And anxiously awaited there, the forms long dead.

One night he lay beside the strand; the waves rolled high,
And phantom forms among the clouds, went swiftly by,
While thunder roll of chariot wheels swept strangely nigh.
Bright lamps they carried, for no moon stood in the sky,

And by each brilliant flash, as rumbling wheels drew nigh,
He saw the cloudy chariot, grandly pass by.
Circling the Island's shore, their airy course seemed bent,
Recurrent, driven swiftly, as when first they went;
And beckoning arms awave, in flashes ambient.
Fleet were the winged steeds—the restless, curbless winds—
Who driveth Jehu-like to-night, angels or fiends?
That lone soul asked, then answered low. "'God's are the winds."
"He rides upon the storm; the waves His sovereign will
Obey; and winds of heaven His purposes fulfil;
He calleth, guideth, and He can say 'Peace, be still.'
I'll rest me now awhile, the angels strong, are kept;
Until they come for me, I shall not be o'erswept.
I'll rest a little now,"—and peacefully he slept,
Slept till the Angel of the Dawn, from Eastern sky,
On gliding, low dipt wing, came softly, slowly nigh,
Lifted the dripping locks, then musingly passed by.

The Children of the Morning gathered one by one,
Around the cheery hearth-stone of the rising sun;
Behold all give a welcome to this day begun.
See royal Blomidon, from bed of feathery mist,
His kingly head uplift, crowned with deep amethyst,
While draperies of night roll to his feet wave-kissed.

As widespread wings of light soar towards the full noon-day
Unto that valley home, the wanderer turns away,
Chill with the damp of night, and of the salt sea-spray.
The voices of the storm, no longer in the soul
Make melody; backward hath swept the surge's roll.
Alone, alone: toiling towards no certain goal.
No vision seen afar, the wavering steps now lead
Forth from the beaten strand, across the level mead,
Into the travelled way;—forgotten, time and speed.
Regardless of the eager, hastening, busy throng,
Unheeded are the sounds of joyousness and song,
All unresponsive to the spirits glad and strong.
The elder people turn sad faces pityingly;
One saith, "See what a wreck that man has come to be;
At twenty-four so handsome, promising—ah me!"
O Son of Sorrow! well do cold and storm and gloom,
With thy enshrouded spirit, blending form assume;
Shadow a fitting robe—a cloud, thy bending plume.

Wrapped in these sable folds, like night-[illegible],
To thy imprisoned soul, at length, shall [illegible]
This garment, and escape its swathing [illegible]
When spring-time came again, for him [illegible] home
Beside the waves, whose siren voices calling [illegible]
So oft with lure imperious, constrained to roam.

O towering years! your boughs perennial lift again,
Disclose the ivied arbor, in the distant glen,
Where bides the lone Survivor, from the gaze of men.
Long, long ago, they led him from the bold sea shore,
Where visions, heavy-winged, hovered ever o'er,
Till Reason spread her pinions, to return no more.
Since then, the added years shade a long avenue,
Where foliage dense and interwoven, screens from view
The day's full light, and mouldering leaves, dim paths bestrew.
He hath not found these paths, therein alone to stray.
He hath not known the dawning nor the full grown day,
[illegible]
Soon—every burden lifted from the weary breast—
Bear into that Beyond, where ever dwelleth, Rest.

O music, that shall [illegible] in the eternal years,
Unmeasured by the sweep of constellated spheres!
Will thy strong notes be [illegible] by Earth's pain and tears?
Will spirits, vocal with the song of endless praise,
Drink inspiration, through the bright continuous days
Where that strange fount amidst the amaranth verdure plays?

The troublous streams recalled, from devious channels deep,
Where through long centuries, their tides were wont to sweep;
And devastating revelries, woe-fraught, to keep;
These streams, reclaimed, transformed and perfected, shall stand
A fountain builded, wondrous beautiful and grand,
And radiant, in jeweled light, of that fair Land.

O life *immutable!* when changing things are fled,
O life ETERNAL, when this mortal life is dead!
Thou art that Life sublime, "Through sufferings perfected."

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